



State Senator Jay Hottinger
Senate Bill 179 Sponsor Testimony
Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee
December 11, 2019

Chairman McColley, Vice-Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee, I am here to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 179.

Senate Bill 179 would reinstate, and continue current law, requiring the display of a front license plate. If no action is taken on this bill, Ohio will only require a single license plate effective July 1, 2020.

Throughout my legislative career, numerous attempts have been made to remove the front license plate. In fact, the legislature has created multiple task forces to study the issue. In 2013, the Ohio License Plate Safety Task Force studied the issue and recommended that Ohio maintain a two-plate requirement. Again, in 2015, the Joint Legislative Task Force on Department of Transportation Issues also recommended preserving the two-plate requirement. In its findings the task force noted, "The loss of that tool would diminish the ability of Ohio's law enforcement agencies to identify violations of law and bring perpetrators of crime to appropriate justice."

Our former colleague, and my original joint-sponsor on this bill, Joe Uecker, was instrumental in pursuing this legislation. As a former police officer, he witnessed firsthand what a vital public safety tool the front plate is in keeping citizens safe and in solving crime.

In addition to Senator Uecker's own experience, during consideration of the Transportation Budget in the Senate, committee members heard compelling testimony from Heather Whitton with the Cincinnati Police Department. To summarize Ms. Whitton's testimony, she stated that the License Plate Recognition System (LPR) is used every day to assist in solving crimes and gave numerous examples of crimes that were solved solely through the use of front plate data.

Furthermore, during a press conference this past summer we heard from Richard Butsko Jr., the Grove City Chief of Police, who stated that Reagan Tokes' car was located using data captured by a license plate reader – that reader only captured the car's front plate and led to the discovery of DNA evidence that helped locate and convict her killer. At the same press conference, we also heard from Muskingum County Sheriff, Matthew Lutz, who explained that without this bill law enforcement's ability to identify vehicles and suspects would be cut in half.

Based on irrefutable evidence and expert testimony from law enforcement, it is overwhelmingly clear that the front license plate plays a critical role in our criminal justice system. In addition to widespread law enforcement support, retaining the front license plate is also supported by ride share companies, bus drivers, the Farm Bureau and the Ohio Prosecutors' Association.

For these reasons, I urge favorable consideration of Senate Bill 179 and I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee might have.